



SPC Andrew Kosterman

Wilbers: Father and daughter in the Kuwaiti desert.

TYPICALLY, when family members meet following separations, hugs and tears are commonplace.

So it was when PFC Elizabeth Wilber – a supply specialist with Headquarters and HQs. Company, 82nd Airborne Division Support Command, from Fort Bragg, N.C. – was reunited in the Kuwaiti desert with her father, Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. John Wilber.

The two, both from North Carolina, said the encounter was something special. “I knew she was leaving a week ahead of me,” said the elder Wilber, an engineer with HQs. Co., 2nd Forward Supply and Support Group. “And I knew she was either at Camp Doha, Kuwait, or at Champion Main, Kuwait. So I asked around and found her.”

Elizabeth Wilber said seeing her dad was a real morale booster. “I feel safer, too, having seen him. Missing my family is the hardest part of being here.”

“I know she’s in good hands; she’s with the 82nd Abn. Div.,” said Wilber, who had only enough time with his daughter for a brief exchange of words before he moved to a forward-operating base in the desert.

When they parted, father and daughter exchanged a resounding “hooah.” Each said they were confident they’d see the other again, safe and sound. — *SPC Andrew Kosterman, 49th Public Affairs Detachment*

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IN the war against terrorism, explosive-ordnance disposal specialists have increasingly been called upon to support safety-and-security missions. Their most visible efforts have been in support of operations in Afghanistan.

Recently, the FBI honored seven EOD specialists, three of them posthumously.

They are: **1LT Kevin Wynes** from the 79th Ordnance Battalion, and **SFC Antony Hammerquist, SSGs Grant Adkins, Justin Galewski, Brian Craig and Jeffrey Pugmire,** and **SGT Jamie Maugans,** all of the 710th Ord. Co.

All received letters of commendation presented by Special Agent in Charge Theodore Jackson, in a ceremony conducted at the FBI’s Atlanta Division.

In the letter, FBI Director Robert S. Mueller III wrote that the soldiers “provided invaluable assistance to the FBI during the investigation of the attempted bombing of American Airlines Flight 63.

“They provided material which was key to identifying [the components used in the explosive material], and we are indeed indebted to each of them for their exceptional support and cooperation,” Mueller wrote.

Richard Reid, the so-called “Shoe Bomber” who was convicted of the attempted December 2001 bombing of the American Airlines flight that originated in France, was recently sentenced to life in prison, without the possibility of parole.

In November 2001 the California-based 710th, a subordinate unit of the 52nd Ord. Group at Fort Gillem, Ga., deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. The 17-man unit spent the following seven months performing its mission in Afghanistan.

On Dec. 22, several hours into the Paris-to-Miami American Airlines flight, Reid attempted to ignite a small amount of explosives in the hollowed-out heel of his shoe.

An alert flight attendant who observed Reid’s unusual behavior thwarted his plan. Members of the crew and a group of determined passengers subdued Reid. The plane was diverted to Boston, where he was taken

into custody, and the FBI began its investigation.

Meanwhile, near Kandahar, Afghanistan, members of the 710th were performing their daily mission: disposing of dangerous explosives left behind by the Taliban.

Then came "the call." The FBI needed the military's EOD units to keep an eye out for a particular type of explosive, to identify the components used in Reid's bomb.

"We had just happened to find a huge pile of the same explosive a day before," said Hammerquist, operations NCO for the 710th. "So we went back out to the site and recovered it."

Unit members packaged up the material and coordinated its safe shipment to the FBI Laboratory in Washington, D.C.

Galewski, Craig and Maugans were later killed in Kandahar, on April 15, 2002, during explosive-clearing operations. Pugmire was injured in the blast, but survived.

By the end of their tour the EOD soldiers had located and destroyed more than 200 tons of ammunition and ordnance. — *E.C. Starnes, U.S. Army Ordnance Corps, and MAJ Anne Edgecomb, U.S. Army Forces Command PAO*



Sawyer: Introducing soldiers of the 3rd ID in Kuwait.

CBS's "The Early Show" and ABC's "Good Morning America" broadcasted live from Camps New York and New Jersey in Kuwait in February to show Americans how **3rd Infantry Division** soldiers fared during the continued buildup for war with Iraq.

"The soldiers have been training hard in harsh conditions," said MG Buford C. Blount III, 3rd Inf. Div. commander. "This gives them the opportunity to let loose a little bit and say 'hi' to their loved ones back home."

Soldiers at both camps waved handwritten signs in the air, hoping that loved ones back home would see them on TV. Several soldiers were given a few minutes in front of the camera to send messages to loved ones.

SSG Theodore Church of D Troop, 10th Cavalry Regt., spoke to his wife and daughters in Columbus, Ga., during the broadcast.

"I just appreciate that out of all these soldiers I was given the chance to talk to my family," Church said.

"This has been absolutely wonderful," Sawyer said. "I think people in the States should see what it's really like to spend five or six months out here — to work every day, with no real time off and nowhere else to go when you do get a little time to yourself."

By early evening, the crowds of soldiers had dispersed, equipment had been packed and all that was left was a clean-up detail.

Smith said that the morning shows offered a great representation of the 3rd Inf. Div. The division's soldiers came across as having great confidence in themselves and their equipment, and with the collective mindset that they can do whatever is asked of them.

— *SGT Craig Zentkovich, Coalition Forces Land Component Command PAO*

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EOD soldiers: Recognition from the FBI.